

This was during the severe drought we experienced, before the onset of the SW. Monsoon.

HONNAMETTI ESTATE,
ATTIKAN, P.O.,
VIA MYSORE,
SOUTH INDIA,
October 11, 1952.

RANDOLPH C. MORRIS

7. HOW LONG DO THE SMALL BATS (MICROCHIROPTERA) LIVE?

In his 'Contributions to our Knowledge of the Duration of Life in Vertebrate Animals—V. Mammals' (*P.Z.S., London, 1931*), Major S. S. Flower writes of the suborder Microchiroptera (pp. 160-61) as follows:—

'Owing to the difficulties of keeping Insectivorous Bats in captivity, and to the very few cases so far recorded of marked, or banded, Bats being recaught, little is known as to their duration of life.

A Noctule Bat, *Nyctalus noctula*, from Hever, Kent, presented by Mr. E. G. B. Meade-Waldo to the London Z.G. 10-12-1914, died on 18-4-1915; this, 4 months 8 days, is an exceptionally long time for any insectivorous Bat to live in captivity.

A long-eared Bat, *Plecotus auritus*, lived in private ownership in Germany, 26-11-1925 to 28-1-1927, 1 year 2 months 2 days (H. Kummerlöwe, 1929).

Two female American Brown Bats, *Eptesicus fuscus fuscus*, captured in a loft near Covina, California, 20-7-1921, were taken to Pasadena, some twenty miles away, banded and released the same evening. On 16-6-1923 these two individuals were recaptured in the same loft where they had been caught nearly two years before; they were again taken to Pasadena and once more liberated (A. B. Howell and L. Little, 1924, p. 261).

British Bats "must reach a minimum of at least four years" (G. E. H. Barrett-Hamilton, 1911, p. 45).

Roux's Horseshoe-Bat, *Rhinolophus rouxi*, in India apparently seldom lives over four years in a wild state, and is not known to reach an age of five years (Knud Anderson, 1917).'

In view of the above it is therefore useful to record that a specimen of the Fulvous Leafnosed Bat (*Hipposideros fulvus* Gray) ringed by Messrs. C. McCann, Mr. Humayun Abdulali and myself (Bombay Natural History Society's No. 4688) on Elephanta Island, Bombay Harbour, on 10th May 1942, was recovered by me on 13th March 1953, that is exactly 10 years, 10 months and 3 days later. This female along with 5 other individuals of the same species had been captured and ringed in the right-hand room (as one enters) of the main cave containing the magnificent Trimurthi, and it was also recovered in the identical place. It seemed adult at the time of ringing and was at least one year old then, so that it had clearly lived for at least 12 years. That it was as yet far from advanced senility is proved by the fact that it was gravid and contained a fairly developed foetus.

Although there were over 30 *Hipposideros* bats in this room when the specimen was shot and a similar number or more in the room on the left-hand side of the Trimurthi, this was the only one bearing a ring.

33, PALI HILL, BANDRA,
BOMBAY-20,
March 15, 1953.

SÁLIM ALI

[Charles E. Mohr in Audubon's Bats (*Audubon Magazine*, May-June 1952) p. 174, writes of bat-ringing in America 'And in 1950 I found a Lieb's Bat which I had banded in February 1941. It had attained a venerable age of at least nine years. This is a remarkable age for so small a mammal. Few shrews and moles, comparable in size, live more than a single year'.

This is perhaps the longest age a small bat had been known to attain prior to the case recorded above.—Eds.]

8. ON THE STRANDING OF A WHALE AT JAMBUDWIP ON THE BENGAL COAST ABOUT 19 YEARS AGO

Recently, I was interested to see in front of the post-office at Namkhana in the 24 Parganas, West Bengal, a vertebra of a whale mounted on a small pedestal, under a young banyan tree (*Ficus benghalensis*). The centrum has a width of 13.5 in. from side to side and a length of 12 in. The vertebra was white-washed with lime except the central portion and the neural arch, which were painted blood-red with vermilion, such as is used for idols in most temples. The bone was held in veneration, not worshipped, presumably on account of its enormous size.

As there was no record of a stranded whale in the western region of Bengal in the list compiled by Moses¹ (1), or in any of the subsequent notes (2 and 3), enquiries were made regarding the origin and history of the vertebra at Namkhana. The only information available was that it was installed there by a former postmaster of the place, who had brought it from Jambudwip, a large uninhabited island, otherwise known as Moor's Island or New Island, lying between Lacam's Channel and Gasper Channel, south of Sagar Island.

The postmaster concerned, Mr. S. Singh, who is now stationed at Diamond Harbour, was approached for further particulars which are as follows:—

Towards the end of January or the beginning of February 1934 Mr. Singh, who was then serving as telegraph master at Mud Point, was informed by Mr. Shenton, the then lighthouse keeper of Sagar, about the stranding of a whale in Jambudwip. He visited the island with some friends to find the carcass already in a state of putrefaction with the bones exposed and oil covering the entire area. Villagers

¹ The Indian Pilot Whale, *Globicephala macrorhyncha* Gray = *Globicephalus indica* Blyth, stranded in dozens near the Salt Lakes, Calcutta, in July 1950, is a kind of Dolphin.